

Tucson Metro Chamber
City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Kevin Dahl

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Ward: 3

Occupation: Arizona Senior Program Manager, National Parks Conservation Association

Education: BA, Prescott College, Major: Ethnobotany. Also did two years undergraduate Economics at ASU Business School and two years Journalism at UA

What relevant experience, knowledge or perspective would you bring to the City Council that prepares you for this position?

I am a lifelong active Democrat and elected Precinct Committeeperson. My career has included leading local and regional conservation organizations, Native Seeds/SEARCH and the Tucson Audubon Society. My wife and I have lived in the ward in a home we own for 38 years; she is a retired TUSD special education teacher and for 8 years has been our neighborhood association president.

What is your vision for Tucson?

While there are many pressing issues facing residents of Tucson, the biggest one that has the potential to completely devastate Tucson is climate change. My vision is that the city, in collaboration with residents, businesses, and many other stakeholders, does all it can to both reduce its carbon output and start programs that help us mitigate and adapt to climate change. This would include more green spaces, in alley ways, vacant city lots, and new pocket parks -- acting as carbon sinks while helping to combat the city's heat island affect. This would also provide recreation opportunities for people and habitat for wildlife. This should be done on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood scale, and should connect city-wide with an emphasis on shading people who use public transit, walk, or bicycle. I support a comprehensive transportation plan, one that includes more investment in road repair (and retrofit for pedestrians and bicyclists) rather than road expansion. We should focus on improving public transit. The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gases, which is something we must change. We can reduce the use of energy to keep houses cool by weather-proofing Tucson's housing stock with insulation, better windows, shading on the west side, low-flow water devices, graywater re-use, and rainwater harvesting. These programs will save energy, lower utility payments, reduce the use of fossil fuels, and improve the quality of life for residents.

What are your policy priorities and how do you see yourself partnering with the Chamber on these issues?

In addition to climate change (see previous answer), I am very interested in being a leader in efforts like Thrive in the '05 that are working to meet the challenges of helping people who are currently homeless, reduce crime, provide better opportunities for affordable housing, and

strengthen the ability of residents to be involved in policy making and implementation of programs in their neighborhoods. Local businesses need to be at the table for all of these efforts, and I hope the Chamber could be a partner in making that happen. I haven't worked with the Chamber much, but I am looking more to finding out how you operate and your priorities when I meet with you.

In your opinion, what are the top three most important issues small businesses in Tucson face today?

I have been asking that question of business owners I know and meet in Ward 3 and in Tucson, also framed as is Tucson doing that is helpful and what more can be done. I am not hearing a lot of specifics about what the City does well and should do more about. What I hear from almost everyone is that coming out of the pandemic months and gearing up for a return to normal, the biggest issue is not being able to recruit enough staff. Something has changed for Tucson's workforce, and I wonder whether this is temporary or a more permanent shift. I would be very interested in your thoughts on this, and what Tucson might be able to do to help.

What is the relationship between the business community and government and how can they work together to promote a business-friendly climate?

Government, with laws and regulations, has created the ground rules for businesses to operate in a way so that consumers are protected from unhealthy or deceptive practices. Whenever rules are made, there are situations where they go too far or where implementation is clunky, overbearing, or irritatingly slow -- and there can be unintended consequences. And there are times when it seems that through their political and economic power, some businesses have made sure that the rules favor their operation. To me I would like to see what we can do to achieve a balance -- or more accurately a dynamic equilibrium -- so that the interests of businesses and consumers are both met as fully as possible.

What is the City's role in economic development and business growth?

Because the City runs some significant operations -- fire and police departments, our water utility, parks and recreation department, planning and zoning -- it will always be a big player when looking at economic development and the success of the business sector here. Businesses have to interact with the city from such obvious matters as zoning and taxes, but also in decisions that will affect them like road widenings and the cost of water. The city is involved in programs that indirectly support businesses, like afterschool programs that enable working families to maintain a regular work day. Frankly I am more interested in how we achieve a sustainable economics that lifts up the most vulnerable of our residents while creating an environment for businesses to succeed, but I will also be open to learning about and discussing other visions for development and growth, especially plans that will help people who currently live in Tucson.

What role should local government play in ensuring an adequate workforce is available to meet employers' needs?

There is a legitimate role for Tucson to play, in collaboration with others, in making sure that training opportunities are available, and that other things that workers need (such as housing, transit, recreational opportunities, etc.) are provided.

What specific efforts do you propose the City can implement to reduce the current level of poverty and homelessness?

I am impressed by the efforts of Ward 3 and others to combine forces with federal funding to develop large public housing projects. We need more transition housing so that homeless can be provided a place with no barriers because we know that housing is the first step, and provides an anchor for all other services -- but we need to do more. I would like to see this program expand and seek the federal funding that is available to implement this. Poverty and homelessness (as some are now calling it) are systemic and have causes beyond the ability of the City to change things on its own. But we must do what we can, in collaboration with others. Perhaps the first thing is to have some roundtables and town halls on this issue so that we can begin to find the collaborators who can work together on such issues that might defeat poverty -- especially the three steps recommended by the Brookings Institute: completing high school, working full time, and getting (and staying) married, while waiting until age 21 to start a family.

What unmet needs do you see in the area of infrastructure (roads, internet and transportation)?

Road maintenance is what I hear most often from Ward 3 residents. The pandemic has taught us that those without internet connections suffer, and we need to make sure broadband is available to all. The digital divide is a problem, I have learned, not just for those without access, but for those in the workforce who are older (40 to 60) and reluctant to adapt to the latest technology -- and are then replaced by younger workers who has this ability as almost a second nature. My vision for more inclusive transit is given in an earlier question.

Do you support a dedicated City tax for infrastructure?

No response given.

Do you support a dedicated City tax for education?

No response given.

Do you support the City's participation in RTA Next?

No response given.

Do you support the expansion of the Central Business District and the use of the GPLET?

No response given.

Would you support the City of Tucson becoming a designated Sanctuary City?

No response given.

Would you vocalize support for the F-35 to be stationed in Tucson?

No response given.

Do you support policies that shift infrastructure improvements to developers and the private sector?

No response given.